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Illegal Israeli actions in Occupied East Jerusalem and the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory

Security Council
Seventy-second year

Identical letters dated 23 March 2017 from the Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General, the President of the General Assembly and the President of the Security Council

I write to you in follow-up to our numerous previous letters regarding the illegal policies of and constant provocations and incitement by Israel, the occupying Power, against the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem. Over the past couple of months, and after the adoption of Security Council resolution 2334 (2016), Israel's reckless actions have continued and been deliberately escalated, exacerbating tensions and risking the further destabilization of the fragile situation on the ground.

In fact, since the adoption of Security Council resolution 2334 (2016), the Israeli Government has been adamant, in word and deed, to send a message to the international community that it has no intention of abiding by the resolution or, for that matter, the provisions of international law in its entirety. While the resolution calls upon both parties to act on the basis of international law, including international humanitarian law, and their previous agreements and obligations, to observe calm and restraint and to refrain from provocative actions, incitement and inflammatory rhetoric, the occupying Power continues to do the complete opposite. It is blatantly acting in contempt of the Security Council, in violation of resolution 2334 (2016) and the principles of international law enshrined therein, and taking us further away from peace and closer to the brink of an all-out confrontation.

On all fronts the situation is deteriorating and of serious concern. In addition to Israel's unabated illegal settlement colonization and oppression of the Palestinian civilian population in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, Israel's aggressions and illegal policies and practices vis-à-vis the Gaza Strip have many analysts warning that Israel could be leading up to a wide-scale military offensive.

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As we near the shameful 10-year mark of Israel's blockade on Gaza, we must draw the international community's urgent attention to the grave plight of the nearly 2 million Palestinian civilians there, who are being imprisoned by this illegal and inhumane siege. Despite the repeated calls to end the blockade, which constitutes collective punishment prohibited under international law, Israel persists with its blockade and the situation on the ground continues to worsen. Moreover, the occupying Power continues to unleash its wrath against the civilian population there. Just this past Wednesday, 22 March 2017, Israeli occupying forces launched a wave of attacks on Gaza, killing Yousef Shaaban Abu Athra (age, 15), in eastern Rafah. The death of 15-year-old Yousef by artillery fire marked the fourth killing of a Palestinian in Gaza since the start of 2017.

In addition to the killing of Yousef and the injury of many others, Israel's air strikes also damaged Gaza's already tenuous electricity infrastructure, when missiles launched against the Shujaaiya neighbourhood of Gaza City cut off the electricity supply in the area. Electricity shortages continue to severely impact the provision of essential services, including access to health care, while also undermining livelihoods in an already grim political and socioeconomic environment and affecting the basics of everyday civilian life.

In a separate incident in southern Gaza on 22 March 2017, four armoured Israeli bulldozers, escorted by several military vehicles, raided al-Qarrara in the northern part of Khan Yunis. Israeli forces indiscriminately opened fire on Palestinian farmers tending to their land there, causing injury to the farmers and damage to their land.

We call upon the international community to demand that the occupying Power cease its military aggression against Gaza and our people living there and to uphold its obligations to protect civilians and ensure respect for the rules of international law. Moreover, we continue to reiterate our call to end the illegal and morally corrupt blockade.

On the issue of illegal settlements, Security Council resolution 2334 (2016) reaffirmed that the establishment of settlements in the West Bank is a "flagrant violation under international law and a major obstacle to the achievement of the two-State solution and a just, lasting and comprehensive peace". However, less than a month after the resolution's adoption, Israel declared that it would move ahead with plans for roughly 6,000 more illegal settlement units in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. In contempt of the will of the international community, and in blatant rejection of the two-State solution, Israel is obviously entrenching its colonization and occupation of the Palestinian land, in grave breach of international humanitarian law, international criminal law and resolutions of the Security Council with total impunity.

At the same time, the occupying Power has intensified its illegal practice of demolitions of Palestinian homes. According to the United Nations, as of late January 2017, a total of 105 demolitions had already been recorded in so-called "Area C" and 14 in East Jerusalem, displacing hundreds more civilians. On 19 February alone, Israeli police issued orders to demolish 40 Palestinian-owned houses in the area of Khan al-Ahmar, north-east of the city of East Jerusalem, continuing the pressure and aggression against our Bedouin community. It should be recalled that, in 2016, Israeli demolitions of Palestinian homes and properties

totalled 1,093, which is the largest figure recorded since the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs began collecting data in 2009.

Moreover, it has been reported that, next week, right-wing Israeli ministers are expected to push forward a bill in the Knesset that aims at the annexation of the illegal Israeli settlement of "Maale Adumim". We reiterate that which we stressed in our letter of 7 February 2017 (A/ES-10/743-S/2017/115) that this provocative Israeli measure constitutes a blatant attempt to "legalize" a crime. It aims at reinforcing Israel's illegal settlement enterprise and the theft of our land, whether by Israeli settlers or by the Government and its occupying forces. In this regard, we reiterate once more that colonization is colonization, no matter how it is packaged or presented, and it is strictly prohibited, and that no amount of legal manipulation by Israel can evade these unequivocal prohibitions.

As Israeli settlement activities continue, so, too, do settler violence and terror. Palestinian civilians, including women, children and elderly persons, continue to be attacked and even killed by Israeli settlers, including several using cars as weapons to kill Palestinians. This was the case with Husni Darraj (age, 58), who died after being run over by an Israeli settler on route 443, which is just one of the 60 kilometres of roads in the West Bank that Palestinians are barred from using and is dedicated exclusively for use by Israelis.

The above-mentioned facts make the recent report by the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, *Israeli Practices towards the Palestinian People and the Question of Apartheid*, even more relevant and timely. It concluded, among other things, that, based on scholarly inquiry and overwhelming evidence, Israel has imposed a regime of apartheid on the Palestinian people as a whole, wherever they may be, affecting Palestinians in Israel itself, in the territory occupied in 1967 and in the diaspora.

At the same time, Israel, the occupying Power, continues its arrest and detention raids throughout the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. Palestinian civilians are being detained daily, with young men and boys especially targeted by the occupying forces, who routinely assault, humiliate and severely abuse, including torture, Palestinian civilians arbitrarily arrested or detained. We call for this illegal practice to end and for Israel to release the approximately 7,000 Palestinian prisoners whom it holds captive in its prisons and detention centres in contravention of the Fourth Geneva Convention.

The above-mentioned incidents are only a few examples of the daily and constant brutality meted out by Israel, the occupying Power, against our people. The countless other violations that have taken place are nearly impossible to document in their entirety. In the light of this totally unlawful and unacceptable situation, we call once again for serious efforts to be undertaken by the international community, particularly the Security Council, to implement resolution 2334 (2016) and all other relevant United Nations resolutions towards relieving the plight of the Palestinian people under this illegal 50-year military occupation.

In this regard, we await the first report by the Secretary-General regarding the implementation of resolution 2334 (2016). The Palestinian leadership feels very strongly that it is beyond urgent that all provisions of this resolution be immediately upheld and implementation be seriously pursued in the face of such brazen

violations and blatant disrespect for the Security Council's authority and legislation. The Council's decisions must be respected by every State, without exception, including by Israel. The Council's credibility is at stake and so, too, are the prospects for peace. If resolution 2334 (2016) is permitted to be dismissed by Israel without fear of accountability, then the prospect of a peaceful future for the Palestinian and Israeli peoples will continue to remain an illusion, with all of the attendant negative consequences. We cannot afford for this to be the reality and urge respect for the resolution and respect for the Charter of our organization, the keys to peace.

The present letter is in follow-up to our 606 previous letters regarding the ongoing crisis in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, which constitutes the territory of the State of Palestine. These letters, dated from 29 September 2000 (A/55/432-S/2000/921) to 7 February 2017 (A/ES-10/743-S/2017/115), constitute a basic record of the crimes being committed by Israel, the occupying Power, against the Palestinian people since September 2000. For all of these war crimes, acts of State terrorism and systematic human rights violations being committed against the Palestinian people, Israel, the occupying Power, must be held accountable and the perpetrators brought to justice.

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter distributed as a document of the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly, under agenda item 5, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Riyad **Mansour**
Ambassador
Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine to the United Nations